

Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of:	)	
	)	
Broadcast Localism	)	MB Docket No. 04-233
	)	

Comments of North Dakota Farm Bureau

Pursuant to 47 C.F.R. §§ 1.415 and 1.419, North Dakota Farm Bureau (NDFB) submits these comments in response to the FCC's Notice of Inquiry released July 1, 2004 concerning Broadcast Localism, specifically paragraphs 13 through 15. NDFB strongly supports the initiation of public dialogue on how the Commission can best ensure broadcasters fulfill their obligations to serve their communities of license. Our greatest concern is the serious decline in agricultural news programming on radio.

NDFB has more than 26,500 member families. Our public policy positions are developed at the grassroots level to ensure that they reflect the views of our rural membership. NDFB belongs to an affiliation of Farm Bureau's across the country. Our policy regarding broadcast media, found in the American Farm Bureau Federation policy book, states: "To make vital decisions, farmers and ranchers need detailed and timely weather information, local news, up-to-the-minute market reports and news affecting production agriculture. We encourage all radio and television stations to maintain and improve their agricultural services."

Unfortunately, the trend today is just the opposite. Instead of improving and maintaining agricultural services, many radio stations are eliminating or curtailing farm news. Part of this can be attributed to the changes in media ownership rules, which allows large ownership groups to acquire multiple radio licenses. Farm programming is being eliminated in an effort to appeal to wider audiences. While the effects of this change have not been as devastating in North Dakota as they have been in other states, we are still feeling the loss.

Radio is still the best source for farmers and ranchers to get up-to-the minute market information. While there are other sources for commodity market and weather news, including subscription-based, satellite-delivered information services and a small number of web sites, farmers rely heavily on radio because it can follow them anywhere.

NDFB hopes that whatever actions are taken to improve levels of community service by radio include the needs of rural audiences, especially farmers who depend on local news, weather and markets. While an urban listener may have many stations to choose from on AM and FM and can find the format that suits his or her interests, that is

not the case in rural areas. There are fewer stations and those that exist may be part of the same ownership group that has chosen to eliminate farm programming.

NDFB strongly encourages the FCC to encourage more community-responsive programming, and to include farm programming in any initiative put forth.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Aasmundstad", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eric Aasmundstad  
President  
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September 1, 2004